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BPA offers \$10,000 reward for information on toppled tower incident

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Bonneville Power Administration

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PORTLAND, Ore. – BPA is offering a reward of up to \$10,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of individuals who damaged and disabled one of its main transmission lines connecting the Pacific Northwest to the Pacific Southwest the night before New Year's Eve.

People who have information about the incident are urged to call BPA's Crime Witness Hot Line toll free at **1-800-437-2744** or call one of the numbers below:

FBI Bend **(541) 389-1202**

Deschutes County Sheriff **(541) 388-0170**

Oregon State Police **(503) 375-3555**

FBI Portland **(503) 552-5346**

The identity of informants will be kept confidential.

At 8:53 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 30, BPA lost electrical service on its Celilo-Sylmar 1,000,000 volt direct current intertie line. Automatic system protection relays isolated the affected transmission line and re-routed the power instantaneously to other power lines, so there was no loss of electrical service. A maintenance crew – sent to the site to investigate the problem – discovered a transmission tower lying on its side. The crew repaired the tower and had the line back in service by 7:32 p.m. Dec. 31.

The incident occurred near where the transmission line crosses US Highway 20, approximately 37 miles southeast of Bend Ore. and 14 miles northeast of Brothers, Ore. The Deschutes County Sheriff, Oregon State Patrol and Federal Bureau of Investigation all are involved in the investigation.

"The tower sustained minimal damage and the line itself was not permanently damaged," said Mike Berg, BPA security specialist. "Nevertheless, significant costs were incurred in responding to this emergency.

"This is the first time in over twenty years that someone has deliberately disabled one of our towers. It was obviously an attempt to cause mayhem on the Northwest Power system and that is why we are taking this criminal act so seriously and offering a \$10,000 reward. We're focused on finding, apprehending and prosecuting to the fullest extent possible the people who committed this reckless,

foolish act."

The Crime Witness Program was created by BPA in 1994 as a cost-effective way to involve the public in combating crimes that could potentially cause power outages. Since then, the Crime Witness Program has generated hundreds of telephone tips resulting in dozens of arrests, and nearly \$3,000,000 in savings in the form of recovered property, restitution and reduced vandalism.

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